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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 TASHKENT 001097

SENSITIVE
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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [UZ](#) [OSCE](#) [KDEM](#)

SUBJECT: Uzbekistan: Embassy Input for OSCE Human Dimension Meeting

REF: 09 STATE 59944

[11.](#) (SBU) Summary: Per reftel request on the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM) in Warsaw (scheduled for September 28-October 9), we are providing the following input for the pre-HDIM demarche to the Uzbek government. We would like the pre-HDIM demarche to commend the Uzbek government for those steps it has taken in 2009 to improve human rights, including adopting legal measures intended to curb child labor, increasing efforts to combat trafficking-in-persons, and reforming legislation to strengthen defendants' rights. However, we also want to urge progress on specific human rights issues, including expanding a program of prison visits by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC); allowing international monitors to assess the use of child labor during the annual cotton harvest, and releasing certain prisoners. Lastly, we would like to again express our willingness to cooperate with the Uzbek government on human rights projects. End summary.

[12.](#) (U) We commend the government of Uzbekistan for taking certain steps to improve human rights in 2009, including: signing an Annual Work Plan with UNICEF addressing the elimination of child labor, passing criminal code amendments that will strengthen penalties against human traffickers; constructing a shelter for TIP victims that is expected to open in the next few months, and adopting several new laws strengthening the rights of criminal defendants, including the habeas corpus law.

[13.](#) (SBU) We urge the government to continue its progress in several areas. First, we urge the government to extend last year's ICRC program that allowed observers into Uzbekistan prisons, and to expand the program to also allow access to pre-trial detention facilities run by the National Security Service. Second, we encourage the government to allow international monitors to conduct an objective assessment of the use of child labor during the fall cotton harvest. An objective assessment would provide reliable information about the true scope of the problem - something that has been hotly disputed for several years. Finally, we urge the government to broaden its prisoner amnesty program in order to release individuals who are being held in custody for their political or religious views.

[14.](#) (SBU) We also express our concern over some negative steps

on human rights in 2009. Two U.S.-based NGOs were registered in 2008, which was a very positive first step in allowing the return of NGOs and media that were forced to depart the country after the 2005 Andijon events. However, the government has showed few signs of liberalizing its restrictions on NGOs or their activities since then. We encourage the government to move forward in this area, and a good step would be to register the International Organization for Migration(IOM), which already operates in Uzbekistan through a local, sponsoring NGO. We also encourage the government to reconsider the registration and testing requirements imposed on the legal defense bar this year, which so far appear to be overly subjective and open to abuse as a vehicle to control or even suspend the activities of certain defense lawyers. Finally, we further urge the government to take steps to allow religious groups in the country to practice more freely regardless of their size or location.

15. (U) We also would like to affirm our willingness to continue to cooperate with Uzbekistan on human rights programs, which in the past have included such things as training for law enforcement officers, legal exchanges, and participation in conferences in areas like habeas corpus. Future programs could be expanded into new fields, as well, including the rights of women and the disabled. We recognize that the Government of Uzbekistan seeks to meet international standards, and we look forward to facilitating this process by providing assistance on human

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rights-related projects.

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